

BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2004

A special meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, August 2, 2004, in the Cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI. William A. Estrella, Jr, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Present: William A. Estrella, Jr., Paul Silva, William M. O'Dell, Marjorie J. McBride, Timothy L. Avila, Mary V. Cabral, Connie J. LaMountain, Deborah A. Redmond and Beverly Z. Travers; Edward P. Mara, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Donna Glavin, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Grants; and Andrew Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Mr. Estrella brought to the attention of the public the large number of student shoes, backpacks and books that were left behind at the high school and at Colt School; anyone missing these items should come in.

Mr. Estrella suggested that School Committee business for the month of August be discussed at one meeting on the 16th and the previously scheduled August 30th meeting be cancelled.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride, seconded by Mr. O'Dell, motioned to cancel the August 30, 2004 School Committee Meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Agenda Item for August 16

Mr. Estrella requested that the regionalization study commission that was required by the bond legislation be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. The secretary was asked to send a reminder to those who have not appointed a designee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

George P. Cooper of Bristol spoke to the Committee about the Superintendent and how he was touched by Dr. Mara's courageous decision for an open session evaluation. Dr. Mara has always made time to listen to his comments and attempts to remedy, but is not shy about letting him know if he is off the mark. Dr. Mara's qualities make this institution work.

EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Silva outlined the procedures in the evaluation process—each member of the Committee was given a grading sheet to rate the

Superintendent's performance in eight different areas. Ratings ranged from 1 (superior) to 4 (unacceptable) with an option of insufficient info (#5), and a space for comments. A composite sheet was made and marks averaged. Overall, the Committee was pleased with the performance of the Superintendent; all written comments were positive, speaking highly of work ethics.

Mr. Estrella reported that out of nine Committee members, seven completed the evaluation form. Dr. Mara's overall average score was 2 (good performance), with highest scores in leadership, School Committee/ Superintendent relations, and community relations. Mr. Estrella stated he has always had a good experience with Dr. Mara, not always agreeing, but able to discuss things on a professional plain. There is not a better person to represent the district.

Mr. Avila: Dr. Mara has made a great deal of headway, is approachable and open with the Committee and the public, and is interested in creating the best possible system. He asked Dr. Mara's plan for keeping the ball rolling. Dr. Mara responded that programs such as Writers' Workshop and the KMS SOS Program will be expanded, grade level expectations in ELA and Math will be implemented, the advisor/advisee program will be utilized and the Mt. Hope Bay Academy will be restructured to meet the needs of more students, three elementary core reading programs will be implemented, the Prime Time Grant will be utilized to support teachers, and numeracy issues will continue to be addressed.

Parents are becoming more involved and are making a difference; all decisions will be data-driven and there will be one district language that everyone understands.

Mrs. LaMountain: Agreed with Mr. Avila and felt that overall, things are much better than in the past. She feels that Dr. Mara has been more parent-friendly, one of her big issues, and asked what he is planning in order to give parents and students more choices. Dr. Mara responded--

personalization at the issue; connecting schools to parents; connections with the community; and more forums for parent input, especially as we move toward the bond. For programming choices, we will offer different programming at the middle school and the Mt. Hope Bay Academy is being restructured to help a wider range of struggling students. A great deal of time and effort has been spent training teachers in differentiated instruction. Early intervention is the key.

Ms. Travers: Although she cannot agree with the evaluation tool, Ms. Travers believes Dr. Mara is sincere, well-versed in education and totally committed; for his first year as superintendent he has ingratiated himself with parents and community; has confronted administration with efficacy; presented a good budget to a tough Joint Finance Committee; we are fortunate to have Dr. Mara as our Superintendent. She feels improvement is needed in communication with her and the rest of the Committee citing the State report on Hugh

Cole; also, more timely evaluations of administration; increased longitudinal data; and students' performance should be better communicated. She also felt the School Committee needs to better define their expectations.

Mrs. Redmond: Feels Dr. Mara has done a very good job after only one year; some of the Committee would like you to see a little stronger hand. She commented that the evaluation tool should be made more user friendly. She is pleased with her own personal experience with the Superintendent and commended him on taking calls and responding no matter how small the issue. Mrs. Redmond questioned data based promotions. Dr. Mara responded there are specific grade level expectations in ELA and math. Anyone who falls one grad level behind will have a personal learning plan. Mrs. Redmond would like to see more positive reinforcements used in our schools and more compassion in the upper grades. Another concern is that average students are falling through the cracks and some of our more intelligent students may be lost because of inadequate challenges. Another concern and perhaps a goal for next year is to review the Mt. Hope guidance department -- more time is needed guiding the 9th and 10th graders—"We are overdoing discipline and underdoing some other things." Mrs. Redmond congratulated Dr. Mara and looks forward to more years of his guidance.

Mrs. Cabral: Feels Dr. Mara has done a great job. She commented that he has recognized the culture of our District and is comfortable

to many entities, knows the children's needs and is structuring programs and molding curriculum to meet them; however, she strongly feels we need to educate the parents and make them feel comfortable. For the future, Mrs. Cabral would like to see all-day pre-school, and the utilization of technology to provide different types of learning environments for our students, such as distance learning. She congratulated Dr. Mara on his first year as Superintendent. Dr. Mara reported that a distance learning program was started at KMS through a Champlin grant and Roger Williams University, and hopefully, if the bond passes, there will be space to offer the preschool program.

Mrs. McBride: Dr. Mara hasn't let her and the community down yet; he has moved the town away from a dark direction. Her goals for him and herself for next year is no #5's and she needs more kinds of things that explain what's going on and what his objectives are. Mrs. McBride thanked Dr. Mara for agreeing to be our Superintendent and bringing us toward the light; she looks forward to many more years with him at the helm.

Mr. O'Dell: Dr. Mara has proven himself to be an asset to the district. In the area of curriculum and instruction, Mr. O'Dell would like to see how Dr. Mara's information relates to the teacher in front of the class. He is very happy with Dr. Mara's leadership; he would like to better understand and see more evidence of cost effective use of resources as well as the performance evaluation and handling of personnel. Dr.

Mara responded that an effective mechanism is learning walks through the classrooms focusing in on student activities and participation—a tool to help define district initiatives.

Mr. Silva: Is very please with the work Dr. Mara is doing; he is always available for issues; he has brought the District further than was believed possible. Mr. Silva commended him for his effort and drive to do what is best for the children.

Mr. Estrella: Dr. Mara is intelligent and honest, teaches by example and is a great shepherd.

Dr. Mara thanked the Committee for their support and freedom to communicate and looks forward to working hard together for the students and to designing a new evaluation instrument.

Mr. Estrella requested that the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee review the Superintendent's salary to make a recommendation to the full Committee.

Short recess.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

2004-26: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the Administrators' salaries and benefits for the 2004-2005 school year.

MOTION: Mr. O'Dell motioned to approve; Mr. Silva seconded.

Dr. Mara recommended a 3.5% salary increase for Administrators explaining that he consulted with neighboring Superintendents and RISSA and that our Administrators deserve more but the budget will not allow.

Comments from the Committee:

Mr. O'Dell—Not pleased with 3.5%; however, the budget can support the recommendation and he will support the Superintendent.

Mrs. McBride—Because of staffing cuts, she cannot support a raise of any kind; in the past three years they have received approximately 13% in pay raises.

Dr. Mara--Total amount for these raises is \$47,000; Administrators still make less per diem than our teachers and are in the bottom third of the state.

Mrs. Redmond—Has the utmost respect for our administrators and asks for patience; proposed a 2% raise--the current rate of inflation; cannot support any more than the rise in the cost of living.

Ms. Travers—Does not support the recommendation; wants something to substantiate all those listed are equal and deserving of the same raise; requested a listing of demographically similar communities; would like feedback on their performance.

Mrs. LaMountain—Administrators are deserving of a raise but not in

favor of 3.5% across the board.

Mr. Avila—Also would like to review similar school systems; agreeable to a raise, but less than 3.5%; would like more data.

Mr. Estrella—The Committee has procrastinated long enough.

Dr. Mara – Would like an opportunity to discuss rather than have a vote taken in haste; will have more information at the August 16 meeting.

MOTION: Mrs. LaMountain motioned to amend the motion for a 2% raise. No second.

MOTION: Mr. Avila motioned to table the recommendation to the August 16th meeting. Mr. Silva seconded, provided every Committee member give Dr. Mara a list of the information they need by the end of the week. The motion passed 6 to 3 with Mr. O'Dell, Mrs. McBride and Mrs. LaMountain voting no.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. McBride, moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary

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